



# Improving the Lives of People with Paralysis

## WHAT IS THE PUBLIC HEALTH ISSUE?

Much still needs to be done to improve the overall health of people with paralysis. They frequently experience such secondary conditions such as pressures sores (decubitus ulcers), urinary tract infections, depression, and obesity, which can be mitigated through education and health promotion programs.

CDC has established a national coordinating facility to provide educational materials, referral services, and self-help guidance for people with paralysis, their families, and caregivers. Healthcare providers and professionals also use this facility to receive information on paralysis, methods to prevent secondary conditions, and improve quality of life. CDC is expanding the dissemination of educational outreach materials to increase the knowledge and understanding of paralysis among those most affected. Collaborative national relationships have been established with rehabilitation facilities, hospitals, disability advocacy groups, and voluntary support groups. CDC is developing the ability to measure the public health impact of paralysis through demographic and statistical research with a focus on the prevalence, causes, and extent of secondary conditions. CDC will provide leadership in helping to facilitate health promotion activities (e.g., improving physical activity, exercise and nutrition, addressing depression/isolation issues, managing weight, quitting tobacco use) among people with paralysis to enhance their physical and emotional health.

## WHAT HAS CDC ACCOMPLISHED?

- CDC continues to support the Christopher and Dana Reeve Paralysis Resource Center, which was established to help improve the quality of life for people with paralysis. The center is a coordinating facility with information specialists, a library, and a website providing educational materials (<http://www.paralysis.org/>), referral services, and self-help guidance to those living with paralysis, their families, and their caregivers. In addition, the center funds community-based projects to improve quality of life for people with paralysis.
- CDC funded two studies to address the role of supportive social networks of people with paralysis. These studies were conducted at the Medical University of South Carolina and the University of Nevada, Reno.

## WHAT ARE THE NEXT STEPS?

- Assist the Christopher and Dana Reeve Paralysis Resource Center to extend services and increase the impact of these services for all individuals and families who can benefit from them.
- Ensure that people with paralysis are included in all programs designed to improve the health and well-being of people with disabilities.
- Support additional research to expand the understanding of the public health impact of paralysis.